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*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

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## Steve King posts meme warning that red states have '8 trillion bullets' in event of civil war

By **Reis Thebault**

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Rep. Steve King has civil war on his mind.

The Iowa Republican broached the subject in a Saturday evening Facebook post — a meme of two fighting Frankenstein figures, one red and one blue, each an amalgamation of states based on their political leanings. The art was ripped and uncredited, as meme art usually is, from a [New York Times book review in 2013](#), and was originally designed by Yarek Waszul.

“Folks keep talking about another civil war,” the meme read. “One side has about 8 trillion bullets, while the other side doesn’t know which bathroom to use.”

King, who Congress recently [stripped of committee assignments](#) over his comments about white supremacy, annotated the image with a smirking emoji and mused, “Wonder who would win....”

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The implication was incendiary: King was openly pondering violent, armed conflict, apparently joking about Republican-leaning states fighting their Democratic-leaning neighbors in a second American civil war.

But King, an Iowa native and sitting congressman, may have been confused about which side he was on. There, forming the blue warrior's biceps, was his home state, delivering a cartographic uppercut to the jaw of its red opponent.

King deleted the post, which he shared on an official campaign page, on Monday. His office did not respond to questions about the picture and his reasons for posting and removing it.

Observers pilloried him for the post, which many saw as further provocation in a divisive political climate that has already seen signs of civil war rhetoric creeping into the discourse. Many called for King's expulsion from Congress, a punishment that would end his nine-term run in office.

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“This is treason,” said Richard Painter, who served as the chief ethics lawyer in President George W. Bush’s administration, on Twitter. “Steve King should be expelled from the House immediately.”



**Richard W. Painter**  
@RWPUSA

This is treason.

Steve King should be expelled from the House immediately.

Steve King shares meme touting red states in potential modern-day civil war - CNNPolitics [cnn.com/2019/03/18/pol...](https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/18/politics/steve-king-civil-war-meme/index.html)

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Rep. Steve King, whose history of making racist remarks has recently come under scrutiny, shared a Facebook post over the [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com)

24.9K 8:20 AM - Mar 18, 2019

[12.1K people are talking about this](#)

Responding to Painter, Harvard Law professor Laurence Tribe modified his criticism: King “isn’t actually COMMITTING treason, but he is fomenting and inciting it. Ample reason to expel him.”

The Democratic Party in Clay County, Iowa, which is located in King's district in the northwest part of the state, told its representative, "Iowa would be better off if you just resigned."

Some criticized King's timing, as he posted the meme the day after authorities in New Zealand say a white supremacist killed 50 people in two mosques. Shannon Watts, founder of the group Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, tweeted that King had ignored the "gun violence in America and across the world caused by division and fear of one another" when he posted the image.

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Others accused King of promoting transphobic language, and at least one scholar attempted a history lesson.

"I grew up in SC where the #CivilWar began, a war that eventually freed 4 million slaves, a war that left 620,000 soldiers dead—including 40,000 Black soldiers," wrote Cornell William Brooks, a professor at the Harvard Kennedy School and former president of the NAACP. "Don't use #transphobia to legitimate #WhiteSupremacy, or bathrooms to spit on graves."

A national political figure for nearly two decades, King has furnished a long history of racist remarks and comments widely viewed as anti-Semitic, white nationalist, or insulting to immigrants and women seeking abortions.

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He has also made at least two other nods to civil war.

In 2018, King said the country was on the brink of civil war. In a tweet, he said, “America is heading in the direction of another Harpers Ferry. After that comes Ft. Sumter.”

Harpers Ferry was the site of abolitionist John Brown’s raid of a federal armory, an attempt to begin an antislavery rebellion that helped spark the Civil War. The attack on Fort Sumter had the first shots of the war.

King has even kept a reminder of the war placed prominently on his desk — a miniature Confederate flag, peeking out from a display that also sported a Gadsden flag. Once again, it seems King may have been confused about sides: Iowa was part of the Union.

***Editor’s note:*** *The source of the art in the meme was added after the artist, Yarek Waszul, reached out to The Washington Post.*

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